

### REMARKS

In the above-identified Office Action the claims were rejected as being obvious in view of the disclosure of the cited Katakura patent. However, as amended, Applicants respectfully submit that such claims are patentably distinct over that reference for the reasons set forth below.

Specifically, each of the independent claims has been amended to include a requirement that when a tag signal is added to a pixel of the color image signal, neighboring pairs of pixels are handled as a set of pixels to reduce the resolution, whereby the image formation can be performed with an increased gradation, and wherein the tag signal represents a photograph image area. This claim requirement is disclosed in the Specification at page 17, lines 7-16.

Referring now to the cited Katakura patent, it is seen that Katakura discloses a printing method which increases the printing speed for black monochrome printing by effectively using compressing circuits, expanding circuits, and video buffers, provided for the processing of other colors. Katakura, however, does not disclose or suggest the newly required limitation that when a tag signal is added to a pixel of the color image signal, neighboring pairs of pixels are handled as a set of pixels to reduce the resolution, whereby the image formation can be performed with an increased gradation, wherein the tag signal represents a photograph image area.

For these reasons it is believed that the claims are now allowable, wherefore the issuance of a Notice of Allowance is solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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